

REVIEWS.

Saturday, May 9. 1713.

Have with what Plainness and Clearness I could, my present afflicted Circumstances considered, gone thro' the four Generals I laid down; and proved, I believe, past a fair Reply, That our *Wine* Trade is in no danger of being Injured by the *French*: I shall say no more to it, till I hear some Objections that I think may have any weight in them worth speaking to.

But there are other Branches of Trade necessary to be spoken to; of which, tho' there are real Dangers to them from the *French*, and by the Peace too, no body takes the least Notice; which to me is a plain Sign, that the other is made use of as a Handle only, and not from a sincere Concern for the good of Trade, and for the publick Interest of the Nation.

The first of these I shall speak to, is, *The Distilling of Brandy*, which I shall but touch at, tho' very essential to the general Good; the Consequences of a Peace, in Commerce with *France*, as it relates to the Distilling Trade, are such as these.

1. A necessary taking off the Prohibitions, and a free Importation of *French Brandy*.

2. Lowering the Duties on the *French Brandy*, so as to bring them to a moderate Price.

Now, there is a just Dispute in this Case, which is not easily decided, (*viz.*) Whether *keeping on the Duties of Brandy* would not be as Destructive to the Distilling *here*, as taking them off; because the Ways and Means of running Brandy, while the Duties make it so well worth while, are so many, that the Quantity imported by clandestine Trade, ruins our Distillers, perhaps as much as a Duty and free Importation could do.

This is a nice Point, and perhaps I may hereafter state it thoroughly; but for the present, give me leave to state the previous Question, which I see many people at a loss about; (*viz.*) Whether the Distilling Trade in *England* is, or is not an advantageous Trade to *England*; and how far it is, or is not worth the Nation's while to preserve it? When this is determined, it may be worth while to enquire, what the properest Methods, either to Preserve, or Destroy it.

The Popular Cry against the Distilling *English Spirits*, as it is of little or no Foundation, so they who complain of it have the least to say for themselves,

that it is possible to imagin a thing that makes so much Noise can have, (*viz.*) That they cannot make them so good as *French Brandy*. Nasty *English Spirits*! Says the nice Punch-drinking Gentleman, and at the same time scarce knows one from the other, when mixt in his Liquor. As to the Nature of the Spirits, I shall leave that to another Discourse; it is not the Nature of the *Spirits*, but the Nature of the Trade that I am upon.

The Distilling of Malt Spirits is founded upon an Article of Trade, as essential to the publick Good in its Proportion, as any Trade we have, or can have in the Nation; I mean the Consumption of Corn, which being the neat Produce of the Land, it must be allow'd is the most immediate Profit to the Nation, of any Trade whatsoever.

All the Projectors of publick Undertakings, all the Calculators of the Nation's Substance, and Pretenders to Improvements, whether in Trade, in Wealth, or in the general Stock of the Nation, must submit to this, That the Consumption of Corn is one of the Fundamentals of the Nation's Wealth: Every Quarter of Corn which the Nation can Export, reserving a sufficient Quantity for our own Expence, so that the Price may not rise too high, is clear Gain to the publick Stock. Every new Trade, which either causes the Corn to be Exported, or to be applied to some Use at Home, which it was not applied to before, and which prevents the Importation of something which must otherwise be brought from abroad, must be a gainful Trade to the Publick, because it consumes our own Produce, and lessens our Payment to Foreign Nations. This now, is eminently seen in the Distilling Trade; Where first, the Corn is consumed; which Corn is our own Produce, pays Rent for our Land, employs our People, our Cattle, our Shipping, &c. And secondly, The Importation of Foreign Spirits is prevented, that is to say, in Proportion.

Nothing is more certain, Than that the ordinary Produce of Corn in *England* is much greater than the numbers of our own People or Cattle can consume: And this is the Reason why, when the Markets are low abroad, and no Demands made for Corn, that Plenty which is other Nations Blessing, is our intolerable Burthen. This was apparent in the latter Years of King Charles and King James, when Corn

was so very Cheap, that almost all the Farmers in England were undone by it; and had it held so till now, the Value of Lands in England must have sunk very considerably before this time. I have known a Farmer Plough twenty Acres of Land, and Sow it with Wheat, and have a vast Crop; and when carried to Market, the whole quantity would not pay for the Husbandry, carrying in, and carrying out; the whole Rent of the Land being sunk out of the Farmers Stock; and the like of Barley, &c.

The Distilling Trade is one Remedy for this Disaster, as it helps to carry off the great quantity of Corn in such a time of Plenty; and it has this particular Advantage, That if at any time a Scarcity happens, this Trade can halt for a Year, and not be lost entirely, as in other Trades it often happens to be; Ye may prohibit Distilling for a certain time, in case of extreme Scarcity, Famine, and the like, and yet the Trade may return and subsist: But in times of Plenty, and a moderate Price of Corn, the Distilling of Corn is one of the most essential things to support the Landed Interest, that any branch of Trade can help us to; and therefore especially to be Preserved, and tenderly Used.

I have, upon all Occasions, been a constant Opposer of the common Notions of our People, for prohibiting the Exportation of Corn: It is true, our common People, upon the least appearance of the advance of Price, immediately begin there, and a stop of Exportation is the first cry; but this is not the only Instance of Popular Error, and where People to redress their Grievances, think of the very Methods that increase them. These poor People, while they Rage at the Exportation of Corn, and Distilling of Corn, overlook the Engrossing, Restraining, Regrating, or as I may well call it, the *Stock-Jobbing* of Corn, which generally is the occasion of raising the Price, and gives us Death in Plenty, and Famine without Scarcity.

These things can never better be spoken to, than at this time, when the Parliament being sitting, it may be to the Purpose to recommend to them the guarding the Execution of the present Peace, from any Consequences which may hurt this Branch of Trade, and stop or lessen our Distilling Trade, which must necessarily end in leaving our Corn unsold, our hands unemploy'd, and our Rents unpaid; the end of all which must of Course be the sinking the Value of Land, and lessening the Employment of our Poor.

The present Enquiry in this Case is — *What is to be done?* Shall we prohibit French Brandy, says one to me? No, by no means, say I: The prohibition of it already has in part ruin'd the Distilling Trade; while Clandestine Trade runs so high in Britain, while 'tis so well worth the Importers while to run the Risque of it, while he is enabled to out-bid, even the Government itself to the Officers who should prevent it, and while if two in three be lost, he is a Gainer: I say, while this is the Case, a Prohibition is our Ruin: All Prohibitions, where the Value

is high, serve but to whet the unfair Merchant, such I must call the Clandestine Importer, to run the Hazard for the Advantage; and if the Care, to make the Prohibition Effectual, is not answerable to the Advantage the Importer can make by Importing such Prohibitions, are rather Encouragements to Importation than Hindrances; because what can Clandestinely brought in, comes free of any Duty at all.

And this is the reason why the Success these People have in running Brandy ruins the Distilling Trade, (*viz.*) Because what Success they have, *what is too but much*, and what Brandy they really Import pays nothing at all; by which means they can undersell the fair Trader, and bring right Brandy to below the Price of a common Spirit.

But if the Duty be fix'd at a Medium, so that on one Hand the Distilling Trade may subsist; and on the other Hand, it shall not be worth while the Importer to run the Risque of a Clandestine Importation; to which also new Penalties may be added, then you may have good French Brandy at those who will go to the Price of it; and a large Branch of the common Sale of Spirits will still be left for the Malt Trade; the Distilling of Malt Spirits, and others, may be kept up, and the growing Consumption of Corn carried on, to the great Advantage both of Land and of Trade.

I know it will be asked me, What Proportion would be just in such a Case, and where I would place the proper Mediums to preserve the Balance between French Brandy, and the English Spirits, &c. to keep the Trade of both alive—Nor am I at a loss to Answer this Question, and to state such a Proposal on very fairly; but I am not turning Projector, laying down Schemes to lead those by who are Wiser than I. My Argument at present is to prove the Nature, Necessity, and Usefulness of the Distilling Trade; and to undeceive those, who, because they cannot drink English Spirits when they can have French Brandy, would therefore have the Trade of Distilling sunk, and none of those Spirits made.

Our Business is to Encourage every Branch of Trade, by which our Produce may find a Vent, which our People may find Employment, our general Commerce be Encreased, and the Value of the Rent of Lands kept up; and this, especially the Distilling of Malt has so great a Concern in, that it must for ever pass with me for a Trade as Profitable to the Publick, as Necessary to be Supported, and as Useful to be Encouraged in Proportion to its Magnitude, as any Trade in the Nation.

E R R A T A in our Last.

PAG. 183. Col. 1. Line 12. for *Providences* read *Providence*; *ibid.* l. 26. for *expose* r. *exposed*; p. 184. col. 1. l. 3. for *dealt* r. *dealt*; *ibid.* l. 27. for *Friend* r. *Friends*; *ibid.* l. 39. for *And* r. *I*; *ibid.* l. line but one. for *enslaving* r. *inflaming*.

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